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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: SENATOR LIEBERMAN MEETING WITH PRINCE FAISAL

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

[11](#). (C) Summary: Senator Lieberman and Prince Faisal met April 17 to discuss regional issues including Iraq, Iranian ambitions, and Hamas. End Summary.

[12](#). (U) U.S. Senator Joseph Lieberman met with Prince Faisal of Jordan April 17 in Amman. Prince Faisal is King Abdullah's brother, and was acting as Regent while the King was traveling abroad. Also attending were Ambassador, Legislative Assistant Fred Downey, military escort Lieutenant Colonel Ed Fortunado, and poloff (notetaker).

Iraq

[13](#). (C) Faisal said that Iraqis) especially those who "risked their lives" to vote - were "very frustrated" that a new government had still not been formed. A "credible alternative" to current Prime Minister Jaafari was needed to break the impasse. The longer Iraq went without a government, the more appeal Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and other extremist terrorists) who remained intent on attacking targets in Jordan - would have among Iraqis. Jordan "wants nothing more" than to capture Zarqawi. The detention of Zarqawi would have more of a positive impact in Iraq than even the arrest of Osama Bin Laden.

[14](#). (C) Faisal was still optimistic about Iraq's future, and hoped that the Iraq Reconciliation Conference for religious leaders, planned for April 22 in Amman, would help the sects put their differences aside. Note: Post is in the process of getting this event postponed. End Note. When asked what might happen if U.S. forces left Iraq prematurely, Faisal replied that "civil war" was likely. He added that Iraqi Sunnis, who did not have their own militias, would be the most vulnerable in such a conflict.

Iran

[15](#). (C) According to Faisal, a civil war in Iraq would lead to Iranian control of the southern part of the country. This outcome would be an important element in Iran's drive to establish "hegemony" in the region. Iran's recent pledge to provide USD 50 million to the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority (PA), Faisal noted, was more evidence of how Tehran was trying to expand its influence in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as elsewhere in the Middle East. He predicted that Iran would soon become "the issue" for the entire region. Faisal characterized Iranian President Ahmadinejad as "a bit unstable" and a "loose cannon") having him in charge of the Iranian government was "very disquieting."

[16](#). (C) Faisal said that major military action by the U.S. against Iran would be "unwise." He warned that in any conflict Iran would have "lots of cards" to play against the U.S. Faisal added that of the close to one million Iraqis

living in Jordan, most were Shia. Note: Until now, post's estimates for all Iraqis in Jordan were in the 400,000 to 600,000 range. End Note. Although he acknowledged that many Iranians felt "deep frustration" with the clerical regime, Faisal thought that a popular uprising was "unlikely" given tight state control of Iranian society.

Hamas

¶7. (C) Faisal asserted that Palestinian voters cast ballots for Hamas in protest against Fatah corruption, rather than in support of Hamas terrorism. While the Hamas electoral win was an unwelcome surprise, it was nevertheless noteworthy as the first instance of an Arab opposition movement coming to power by democratic means. Faisal claimed that there was a difference between Hamas leaders "on the inside," who had to behave "realistically" to meet the Palestinians public's needs, and those "on the outside" who focused more on fiery rhetoric. He noted that Hamas, unlike Islamic Jihad, had shown a degree of pragmatism by complying with the informal cease-fire agreement in 2005.

¶8. (C) Jordan was keeping channels open with the Hamas-led PA in order to press it to move "in the right direction," Faisal said. Hamas "must learn" that it will not succeed as a government unless it talks directly with Israel and renounces violence. The big question was how to get Hamas to change without punishing the Palestinian people. When PA salaries go unpaid, Palestinians are likely to blame the West - particularly the Europeans - rather than Hamas. If Hamas were to directly negotiate with Israel, Faisal added, any agreement they reached would be more likely to be accepted by the Palestinian public.

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¶9. (C) Faisal stated that for Fatah to be an alternative to Hamas, it must reform itself. He feared, however, that Fatah might simply wait for Hamas to fail without addressing the corruption and cronyism that caused it to lose the legislative elections. With respect to internal Palestinian security, Faisal told Senator Lieberman that the Palestinian Badr Brigade present in Jordan, which numbered "several thousand," would be able to help check growing violence in the Palestinian territories, particularly since they were "more professional" than PA security forces and less linked to factional groups. Israel had so far rejected this idea, however, as the brigade's deployment to the West Bank after many years in Jordan raised thorny issues related to the right of return.

¶10. (U) Senator Lieberman did not have the opportunity to clear this cable.

HALE